

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington,
Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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NEW FRIENDS



Chester Highway Department worker Jason Ellershaw, left, and Officer Andre Quieroga from the Massachusetts Environmental Police helped save an owl with a broken wing along Route 20 in Chester on Wednesday, Feb. 10. Jason Ellershaw wrapped the owl in a blanket to keep it warm and sat with it for two hours while waiting for the Environmental Police to arrive. More information about the owl available on page 7.

Submitted photos by Jason Ellershaw

CHESTER

Plan to improve water accepted

By Peter Spotts

The Selectboard has accepted a 21-step strategic plan to improve town water, assuming funds can be found to pay for it all. The plan was created by Richard Gullick, of Water Compliance Solutions LLC.

Former Selectman James Higby helped create the town Water Improvement Committee, which hired Gullick two years ago, and has been working with Gullick to identify issues and solutions for town water. Gullick presented the plan he crafted to address three the economy, efficien-

WATER, page 7

WESTHAMPTON

Safety complex set for Feb. 27 vote

By Shelby Macri

Residents have several more chances to attend information sessions for the new Public Safety Complex before voting at Special Town meeting for authorization for the construction of the project on Saturday, Feb. 27.

The Safety Complex Building Committee is offering informational meetings in the weeks leading up to the STM to give residents all the information they need to make a vote and minimize

COMPLEX, page 14



From left; Assistant Fire Chief Steve Holt, Selectman Philip Dowling, and Art Pichette present plans for a new Public Safety Complex during an informational meeting at the Town Hall on Monday, Feb. 15.

Photo by Shelby Macri

BECKET

Passionate debate continues hearing

By Peter Spotts

Tension was high as the continuation for Tetrahydra Agtek LLC's proposed marijuana cultivation facility at 509 Quarry Road was continued for the second straight month after a lengthy discussion on Wednesday, Feb. 10. Nearly 70 people attended the Planning Board's Zoom call.

The meeting opened with property owners, Adrienne and Josh Metcalf, making an impassioned statement about their family's town history and

HEARING, page 12

GATEWAY

High school basketball, hockey get second chance

By Shelby Macri

The Gateway School Committee approved the participation for student athletes in a new Fall Two season, which will start on March 1 at the committee meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 10.

The Fall Two season will take place from Mar. 1 to Apr. 25, this season will include winter sports that

weren't able to participate in their usually season dates. The sports taking part in this newly proposed season include basketball and the hockey co-op with Southwick, since these sports lost over 50% of their season due to Gateway being remote.

"This item is about the Fall Two season, recently presented to schools that I strongly support."

Superintendent David Hopson said. "I recommend that the school committee accepts this proposal for the season which will be held at a different time."

The new seasons is a good opportunity for student athletes who missed out on playing their sport this past year. It will take place as long as the school is in a hybrid learning model; once it's

deemed safe enough to have students back to in-person learning, it'll be safe enough to allow students back to sports.

This idea of canceling sports while students are remote caused a discussion at the meeting, asking if sports can be untied from the schools remote or hybrid

CHANCE, page 9

BLANDFORD

Designers eye Town Commons

By Mary Kronholm

Last Thursday, Feb. 11, several residents noticed a good-sized group of people walking along Main and North Streets early in the day. Of course, a dozen or so people walking the area with road conditions not particularly conducive to foot traffic would be a curiosity. The alert was out on social media almost immediately.

The group included Town Administrator Joshua A. Garcia and 11

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HILLTOWNS

Stars could be aligning for East-West rail project

By Michael Harrison

One day, two college buddies caught up while wrangling luggage from a plane in Gary, Indiana. Chances are, neither thought the vicissitudes of life would lead one of them to a place on the world's stage before his 40th birthday.

The plane they unloaded carried the belongings of then-presidential candidate and first-term U.S. Senator Barack Obama and his campaign staff. Eric Lesser, a campaign aide who went on to serve in the White House as special assistant to David Axelrod, Obama's chief advisor, had let his good friend "Pete," a native of South Bend, Indiana, know he would be in the Hoosier state and maybe they could spend some time together.

Perhaps the two former Harvard students grabbed dinner or a beer later. Friends for life at that point, they still get together when they can. Or, Pete being Pete, he may have used all the free time he had that day helping his old pal unload that plane. Even if that bit of trivia is confined to the dustbin of history, it's wholly inconsequential compared to how their lives would continue to intersect.

Lesser, a state senator representing the 1st Hampden and Hampshire District – including Ludlow, Wilbraham, Hampden, East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Granby, Belchertown, and parts of Chicopee and Springfield – is no stranger to Pete's new boss, President Joe Biden.

Pete – Pete Buttigieg, a.k.a. Mayor Pete – started to make his name as the second youngest mayor in South Bend history at age 29 in 2012, and later as a rival to Biden in the 2020 primaries. He now serves in Biden's cabinet as Secretary of Transportation.

For Lesser, who's passionate about the proposed East-West passenger rail line from Boston to Pittsfield with depots in Chester, Springfield, and Palmer, it might not hurt to have friends in high places.

How they met? Taking a 'brain break'

They spent only one year as schoolmates, though Lesser and Buttigieg probably would have become friends regardless of how they met. Both have an enduring intellectual curiosity, are service-minded, and can talk policy like others talk sports. Still, when they met, one was getting his feet wet in Cambridge while the other was preparing for post-grad life.

"I was a freshman and he was a senior at the time," Lesser said. "I would describe him as a bit of a big man on campus. He was president of the Institute of Politics, which was kind of the youth political center at Harvard. But he didn't carry himself that way. He is a pretty understated guy. He was sort of universally liked, well known, but not in a sort of outlandish or braggadocious way."

In other words, kind of cool?



Back in 2008, Harvard grads Pete Buttigieg and Eric Lesser pose for a photo outside then candidate Barack Obama's campaign plane.

Courtesy photo

"It was very much a kind of quiet charisma," Lesser said.

When they met, Lesser found out the accomplished senior was humble enough to offer friendship to the newbies.

"And he had a reputation as being a really sincere and really brilliant person and very committed to his hometown even then," Lesser said. "I remember actually the first time we met, we met up for something that was called 'brain break,' when they would put out snacks in the dining hall in the middle of the night, like around midnight. People would take breaks from studying or from the library and they would go to the dining hall to get these snacks. And I remember meeting up with him and I was just a kid from Longmeadow who found myself at Harvard, and we met up at the brain break and we chatted. It was clear pretty quickly that he was a really unique talent and a unique person."

One of the first things they bonded over was embracing their roots.

"He was very committed to his hometown," Lesser said.

Lesser, who strengthened his activist bones in high school fighting to reverse teacher layoffs, admired how Buttigieg looked for ways to leverage education and experience to help lift their communities.

"I was really drawn to that because that was really the story I identified with, so we became friendly and we kept in touch," Lesser said. "He graduated, of course, and I was still in school, and whenever he was back in Cambridge or back on campus, we would try to meet up and we kept in touch."

When Buttigieg lived in Chicago, Obama's home base, Lesser and Buttigieg would spend time whenever the campaign made a weekly stop in the Windy City so then-candidate Obama could spend a weekend with his family.

"About once a week, we would end up back in Chicago, and Pete and I fell into a bit of a routine of hanging out on Saturdays and on Sundays, and then I went to work at the White House, and I remember him talking to me about the house he was preparing to buy in South Bend, the work he was doing there," Lesser said. "I remember he called me one day and said that he was going to be running for state treasurer of Indiana and I thought that was a great idea."

"Unfortunately, that campaign didn't go as planned," he said. "But I think he did learn a lot. And he really got to be well-known in the state, but it was a really hard time. This was the 2010 election cycle, one of the hardest years for Democrats. Indiana in particular was a very interesting state at that time because it was really one of the ground zeroes of the recession. The Kokomo (Ind.) auto plant, for example, had laid off significant numbers of people. You had a significant auto industry in Indiana that was very hard hit by the recession."

Buttigieg's opponent in that race for treasurer, Richard Mourdock, went on to oppose the Obama administration's bailout of the auto industry during the recession.

"I mean, he was actually suing to block the Obama auto rescue at the time and really hurting his own state, which had tens of thousands of jobs tied up in the auto industry," Lesser said. "And (Buttigieg) really helped elevate that issue and bring that to the forefront."

Not long after that, Buttigieg made a life-changing decision.

"He was approached by community leaders in his hometown in South Bend and I remember him calling me and saying, 'you know, I'm thinking about running for mayor' and I said 'cool – that sounds great.' And of course, he won."

While Buttigieg was settling in as

mayor of that well-known college town, Lesser paid a visit and the two took in Lesser's first Notre Dame football game.

"It was an out-of-body experience," Lesser laughed, recalling the passion of the Fighting Irish faithful.

"It was pretty incredible. It was very cool and I saw firsthand how much he was, frankly, just beloved in his community."

Lives intersecting again

Before the game, Lesser, staying at Buttigieg's place, came downstairs while Buttigieg was dealing with – wait for it – a transportation issue.

"He was on the phone with his DPW about issues that had happened overnight," Lesser said. "It was like first thing in the morning, he was on the line with this DPW head and now he's dealing with a lot of the same issues – just on a bigger scale."

Speaking of, Lesser can't guarantee that Buttigieg can help move the needle on the East-West Rail project, which is now largely in the hands of MassDOT, including a second look at what the plan's supporters, including Lesser, Rep. Jake Oliveira, Sen. Anne Gobi, and Rep. Todd Smola, say is a gross underestimate of projected ridership. But federal advocacy and funding is essential. Having an influential friend who also happens to be a fan of public transportation and infrastructure renewal can't hurt.

"We'll certainly be talking to him," Lesser said.

"Now we have a federal government that's going to be approaching rail and is going to be approaching mass transit from the standpoint of 'how can we help' rather than a standpoint of 'how do we stop it.' And frankly, that's why I think it's even more urgent that we have our state government do its part, which means that they need a ridership analysis that's accurate," he said.

"The Baker administration needs to make rail a bigger priority and they've got to do this improved demand analysis and they need to do a full environmental analysis of what the benefits would be," Lesser said. "So, I don't want to let the state off the hook because the Baker administration needs to do its part to really prioritize this project and get those ridership estimates where they need to be."

"That being said, we have really a united front now federally that we haven't had in a very long time. President Biden, all the way through his vice president, through his secretary of transportation, are now going to be looking at a project like this," he said. "And Pete knows about this project because I've talked to him about it over the years. So he's not going to be looking at it completely new."

And if it comes to fruition during the Biden administration, the friendship between a small town intellectual from Indiana and another from Western Mass. could be partly to thank for it.

COVID-19 vaccinations available in Amherst, Northampton

The local health departments of Hampshire County are pleased to share information about COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Hampshire County.

For years, the county been working together to establish plans for public health emergencies including mass dispensing. Strong partnerships, annual exercises, and robust stockpile of supplies have proved to be extremely useful in current response efforts. Recently, local first responders including police, fire, EMS, and dispatchers throughout Hampshire County were vaccinated. An effective clinic model to vaccinate members of the community safely and efficiently has been established.

Although health departments would

like to offer as many different locations as possible, the COVID-19 vaccine storage, handling, administration and reporting requirements are significantly more complex than a traditional flu vaccine clinic. As a result, all vaccination sites will serve multiple communities from a region and must meet very specific requirements in order to receive vaccine. At this time, Hampshire County has two regional COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Hampshire County —The Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst and The Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton.

The Department of Public Health has developed a vaccine distribution time-

line and it can be found at www.mass.gov. Both Amherst and Northampton sites have committed to provide vaccine distribution throughout all phases of the Commonwealth's roll-out plan. Individuals who are eligible to receive the vaccine will be able to register via a link on the city websites www.amherstcovid19.org or www.northamptonma.gov/vaccine-clinics.

Additional clinics will be scheduled during the coming weeks based upon weekly federal and state allotments and will follow the phased guidelines as defined by The Department of Public Health. Eligible individuals can register online for an appointment. A second dose

of the Moderna vaccine will be offered on or after 28 days later to anyone who receives their first dose at the clinics. If individuals need assistance with online registration, please call 413-587-1219 for Northampton or 413-259-2425 for Amherst and leave a detailed message. A health department representative will get respond within two business days.

Please note that the vaccine is free to individuals and is being provided to the states by the federal government. Sites can bill for a small administration fee to cover the cost of running clinic and insurance information will be requested. However, no person will be turned away due to lack of insurance.

HILLTOWNS

GYAA opens travel soccer registration

Registration for the Gateway Youth Athletic Association spring travel soccer is now open. This program is open to all students from third through eighth grade. As of now, the league is planning to follow similar rules to those from the fall season, though the GYAA remains hopeful by the time the season begins some of the restrictions may be lifted. The new registration site can be reached through clubs.bluesombrero.com/gatewayyaa. Please note the GYAA will be following all protocols outlined by the state and local boards of health regarding the safe return to play. A copy of these guidelines can be provided at any time upon request.

The GYAA is always looking for more input and involvement to help keep improving the programs offered. There are several board positions currently vacant including treasurer, recreation soccer director, and secretary. The next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, at 7:30 p.m. All meetings for the foreseeable future will be virtual. Anyone with questions, comments, or concerns can contact Jason Forgue anytime at 413-205-6504.

Hilltown Community Health Center opens vaccinations in Huntington

Hilltown Community Health Center began vaccinating its patients at its Community Center in Huntington last week, in accordance with federal and state guidelines. Patients at least 75 years of age, as well as any community members who are part of the state-designated Phase 1 group, can call HCHC for an appointment.

“HCHC has been vaccinating its staff and other members of the Phase 1 prioritization group since late December,” said Eliza Lake, HCHC chief executive officer. “We are happy to now offer vaccinations to our patients who are 75 year of age and older.”

HCHC is directly contacting its patients who meet these criteria by phone and letter, regardless of whether the individual receives services from its medical, dental, behavioral health, or optometry departments.

HCHC’s vaccination clinic is located at its Hilltown Community Center, 9 Russell Road in Huntington.

“We are very lucky to have this space in which to stand up a clinic,” said Lake. “Given the need for social distancing and a 15-minute observation period after each vaccination, the logistics and staffing required to run a clinic are very complicated. Running larger scale vaccination clinics in our Health Centers in Huntington, Worthington, and Amherst would have been much more difficult.”

HCHC estimates that within a week it will be able to offer 150-200 vaccinations a week at the Community Center, subject to the supply of vaccines, and hopes to do more in weeks to come.

HCHC will be offering the COVID-19 vaccination developed by Moderna, which received the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s emergency use authorization in December. The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine is administered as a series of two doses, one month apart. At this time, data are not available to determine how long the vaccine will provide protection, nor is there evidence that the vaccine prevents transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from person to person.

Funding for the vaccination site is being provided, in part, through the generous support of Whalen Insurance, located in Northampton, MA.

“Whalen Insurance is a family business and giving back to the community has been a part of who we are for 60 years”, said Peter Whalen, president of Whalen Insurance. “In times of need, like these, Whalen Insurance considers it an honor to be able to support the needs of our community’s residents.”

For more information, please contact Lake at 413-238-5511 or elake@hchcweb.org

HUNTINGTON

NORWICH HILL

The First Congregational Church of Huntington reminds everyone even though our physical doors are closed until further notice, we are most definitely open for worship, praise, ministry, and fellowship. We are an Open and Affirming Church inviting, welcoming and affirming everyone — seekers, believers, and wonderers alike — on their journey of faith, to join in 10 a.m. Zoom Sunday worship.

Our reading for the First Sunday of Lent, Mark 1:9-15, invites us to experience God, busy working in the hard and desolate places of our lives, so that we may know love, hope, and mercy.

The pastor is always available to

speak with you. If you do not receive our emails and would like to connect with our Zoom worship service and/or fellowship time, please contact Pastor Carol at firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com to receive the information you will need to participate or send us a message on Facebook.

Please use the phone numbers and email address provided to stay in touch or to contact the pastor. You are also invited to find us on Facebook at “Norwich Hill” for updates, information, and spiritual encouragement. For more information, please contact 413-667-3935 or 860-798-7771 or firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com.

FROZEN FLOODPLAIN



Russ LaPierre treks across the frozen Huntington Knightville Floodplain on Old Worthington Road.

Submitted photos

DRESSED FOR THE ROAD



Hiking in February means it’s time to bust out the boots as Kim Kelliher, right, and Russ LaPierre head down the East Branch Trail at the 6-mile marker in Huntington.

Submitted photo



Russ LaPierre and Liz Massa take a moment to enjoy iced over Old Worthington Road.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

The Garden Lady
tackles milk jug seed
sowing, part 1

Barbara, who gardens in Wilbraham, wrote to me recently, complimenting the column (thank you!) and asking if I had any opinion of “winter sowing” seeds in re-used gallon jugs. This technique is all the rage right now on social media and in gardening blogs, and while I had read about it many years ago and again recently, I have never tried it myself. Perhaps some research into the topic would prove beneficial for me as well as my readers!

The basic premise of winter sowing is to plant your seeds in mini-greenhouses (the gallon jugs), place the jugs outside and simply let nature take over. The advantage being that no heat mats or lights are needed. No window sills full of seedlings, either. While I don’t think it is as simple as it sounds, I do think trying it would be a fun experiment. Read on this week and next to consider some of the pros and possible cons of this seed starting technique.

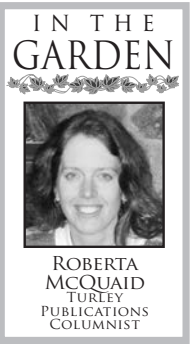
Years ago I read a blog where a master gardener was encouraging folks to start native perennials in milk jugs outside; he called it “winter sowing.” The seeds of many of these plants require a period of cold and moist stratification to break seed dormancy. In simple terms, they need to go through winter in order to sprout. Think of it as nature’s safety mechanism; seeds germinate at the right time to survive and thrive! You may ask, then, why not just sow the seeds outdoors in the garden? In theory it sounds good, but in reality “the wild” is not the best seed bed. From hungry birds and rodents, to wind and drenching rains, success is hit or miss. Safely inside the milk jug, but at the same time outside in the elements to freeze and thaw, freeze and thaw, tricky seeds are coaxed into germinating. Success at your fingertips!

My method of combating tricky germinators has always been the refrigerator. By putting seeds in moist soil in a small plastic bag and chilling them for a month or so at 40 degrees, I am usually successful at providing an abbreviated “winter,” satisfying germination requirements that break dormancy. Recently, I watched a video from a wildflower specialist in Canada, who abbreviated “winter” a bit further. She simply places seeds in the fridge for 24 hours, then the freezer for 24 hours. Five times back and forth and she swears dormancy is broken.

After the period of stratification has passed, seeds are handled as normal, sown on the surface of a moist soilless mix with the provision of bottom heat and supplemental light. But what if I didn’t have the props, or even enough window sills to limp along seedlings inside? Here is where I think sowing in milk jugs could be of benefit, and it goes beyond “winter” or even seeds that need specialized treatments to germinate.

More recent blogs speak of starting everything from cold-hardy annuals to heat-loving vegetables inside milk jugs, and while I don’t think the method is fool-proof, or meant for the lazy gardener, I do think there is good reason to give it a try. Gather some supplies: duct tape, empty gallon jugs, decent seed starting soil, a paint pen and a selection of seeds. Perennial herbs and flowers can be sown right away and next week the how-to portion will explain exactly how to do it.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Promoting open discussion is not censorship

This letter is in response to “Media doesn’t tell the whole story,” The Country Journal, Feb. 11.

Mr. Cousineau, I am glad to hear we have found some level of common ground. I simply cannot, however, understand how one could equate ensuring all sides are heard to promoting censorship. On the contrary, the concept of equal time promotes a free and open discussion of all ideas and should encourage respectful and vibrant discussions on all topics. As stated in my previous letter, the “Fairness Doctrine” was repealed so of course there would be no legal mandate for Congress or the media to follow it. I suggested we create something similar while at the same time respecting the First Amendment. I will agree that we currently do a horrible job enforcing immigration laws, along with existing gun laws, and so on. We have a responsibility to impose laws in place and would simply like to see one, also enforced, to ensure all have the opportunity to openly debate any argument. While I find the ‘F&#% Biden’ flags hanging in several local towns reprehensible and deplorable to our community, at the same time I can empathize with the frustration that led to that decision and respect the right to fly it.

I will also agree that the media (ALL media) reports on COVID-19 are misleading. I hope you would agree they are misleading on both sides. Can you or I honestly be the one to decide that an overblown indication of percentages is more/less harmful than passing it off as you shouldn’t worry

and it will just go away? I’m sure both of us know plenty of people that were dramatically affected by symptoms and plenty more which felt they barely had more than a cold. Could this one example not be used as an argument to ensure both sides are allowed to discuss and share their opinion?

You ended with a compelling quote, so I would like to end with a compelling story. There once was a man that unexpectedly won an election in his country through the use of intimidation tactics and a penchant for utilizing emotional rather than rational appeals. This man took that victory as a mandate and began the fight to consolidate his power through actions such as insulting the press, using violence against the left, promoting militia activity, and convincing a political party to be unequivocally loyal to him. Seventy-one years after the death of this man, Benito Mussolini, voters in the United States elected Donald Trump to be their President.

Confucius said, “If you are the smartest man in the room, then you are in the wrong room.” Well, despite numerous instances of self-promoting as such, facts clearly indicate Trump never was the smartest in any room. Thankfully, we the people corrected our mistake and got him out of the oval office. I fully respect you feel exactly the opposite. I am glad we have had the opportunity to conduct this open discussion and were not censored through exclusion by this publication.

Jason Forgue
Chester

Good books to keep and read this year

“The Age of Reason 1 & 2” by Thomas Paine, “Tocqueville and the American Experiment” by Professor William R. Cook; you can get the disk at thegreatcourses.com. Other good reads are “Secret Empires” by Peter Schweizer, “One Nation” by Dr. Ben Carson, “The Federalist Papers” by Hamilton-Madison-Jay, which will give you insight to the Constitution of the United States, and of course, “The Bill of Rights” by Amar and Adams.

Once you have these under your belt, you will understand just how your rights are violated by the Massachusetts Legislature and Congress. It does not relate to either side of the aisle. In Massachusetts, of course, it doesn’t matter, because our Legislature is 95% Democrat. I wonder does that make us a totalitarian government? Hmm. I have others also, but this should give you a headache for now.

Ted Cousineau
Blandford

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If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to countryjournal@turley.com, or call us at 413-283-8393. Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.

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OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Divine Water

By Deborah Daniels

There was enough snow and ice for us all to have had a chance to walk on water. Just where does all this snow go? It melts and percolates down into the water table. Tapping into that water was important to well diggers. That leads to the question of how did old timers find water for digging a well? Before all the study by scientists of below ground topography and porousness of rocks, dowsing was used to locate water. You would consult your local dowser before digging a well. His or her reputation was about all the recommendation you needed. They would walk your property holding a Y-shaped willow or hazel branch until it twitched or pointed down to the spot where underground water could be found. That was the place to dig your well. This was water dowsing also known as water divination done by a water witch. Traditionally the willow branch had to be pliable and held with both palms facing up and the single point of the Y branch out front. Some described dowser's as having mysterious powers or used incantations to help locate water. Apparently, there was enough success for them to be consulted for well digging. Was there a sixth sense or another force of nature that enabled these dowsers to find water? This has been debated almost from the time dowsing was first recorded in a 1556 Swiss book.

Dowsers do exist and still practice finding water. Dowsers today use tree branches, L-rods, originally made from coat hangers and pendulums. They are employed to find minerals and even lost items for folks as well as water. When the branch or rods dip, twitch, or cross-over often there is water below. Watching dowsing videos, all practitioners talk about the need to be detached emotionally, but open to a "dowsing response," or open to a cosmic awareness of the force of nature and water. Many claim it can be learned, but it must be practiced often in order to become successful.

Hydrogeologists, the scientific water finders, will tell you that just about anywhere in America you will hit water if you dig deep enough. Rainfall and snowmelt percolates through soil and rock down to the water table. The water table fluctuates according to the amount of precipitation and the degree of porous layers of rock and soil above it. The water table is where the water collects below ground. It is not a river below us. Despite all the sophisticated equipment and geophysical study, a lot of digging does occur without finding



1942 photo of George Casely using a hazel branch to divine water. Online image



Deer prints show the animals walked on water during the cold winter months.

water. Drilling and digging is expensive. The German government was looking for a cheap way to locate wells for drinking water in third world countries in the 1990s. They hit upon using experienced dowsers with drill crews in Sri Lanka. They were successful in finding water 96% of the time, drilling 691 holes over 10 years. The statistics of these correlations far exceeded lucky guesses. Furthermore, the underground water was often deeper than 100 feet and so narrow that misplacing the drill only a few feet meant a dry hole.

The physicist in charge theorized that subtle electromagnetic gradients may result when natural fissures and water flows create changes in the electrical properties of rock and soil. It is this that dowser's sense and unconsciously respond to by wagging their forked sticks. Was this the sixth sense dowsers are gifted with? Certainly, the Germans found it useful to team up with dowsers.



Ice crystals clinging to a weed after recent snowfalls. Submitted photos by Deborah Daniels



Kids ice walking on a partially frozen mill pond.



L-rods crossing to indicate water. Online image

There are many skeptics who say dowsers do not find water and if they do it is purely due to chance. There have been many challenges to dowsers to identify water running through buried pipes laid out in experiments. The few dowsers who are somewhat successful have always been discounted with statistical analysis saying it was due to chance. Scientists say there is no physical evidence to explain what they do. The motion of dowsing rods is attributed to the ideomotor response, where the random movements of the dowser is amplified into a bigger movement in the branch that is believed to be caused by a powerful force. Yet no one can describe, find, or identify that force. Most scientists agree dowsing is a hoax to locate your wallet not water.

Yet there is an American Society of Dowsers, begun in Danville, VT. in 1961. It maintains a directory of active dowsers, holds conferences and lectures,

claims worldwide membership, and actively promotes and develops dowsing practices. Dowsing is certainly alive and twitching today. Their informal motto is dowsing works when there is a need not greed. They do follow protocols of dowsing, but they do not explain how it works.

So, you have to ask, if dowsing flunked the controlled scientific experiments, why do so many still believe it works? Well, we do have evidence that bats, birds, sharks and fish respond to non-visual electrical and magnetic signals that we cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste, isn't it possible some humans can receive extrasensory signals as well? Go figure! Have a dowsing story, please share it, we would love to hear it.

Do you have a memory or historical curiosity from the Hilltowns that you'd like to share with your neighbors? Send your story and photos to countryjournal@turley.com.

HISTORY MATTERS

Feb 16 to Feb. 28

Twenty years after the United States was freed of Britain, America went to war, again, this time against the populous pirate population in the Mediterranean. Pocketed throughout Africa, in Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and Tripolitania [Libya], they ambushed U.S. merchant ships, seized cargoes, commandeered crews and collected large ransoms. Hostilities got so heated that President Jefferson dispatched the Navy in 1801. In October 1803, the Philadelphia, a part of an expeditionary force, ran aground off the coast of Tripoli, and was captured, causing concern that America's proprietary know-how would be re-constituted in enemy warships. On Feb. 16, Lt. Stephen Decatur and 74 of his men, including nine marines, disguised themselves as Maltese sailors, crept into Tripolitan waters, boarded the Philadelphia, overpowered the crew and

torched the vessel. The daring nature of their perfectly executed mission, without a single American casualty, was heralded around the world. Even British Admiral Horatio Nelson, arguably the most famous seafaring hero of the time, called it the "most daring act of the age." The Grateful American Book Prize recommends "Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History," by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger.

Polio vaccine

On Feb. 23, 1954, the students at Arsenal Elementary School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, were the first to receive a vaccine, developed by Dr. Jonas Salk, to repel the polio pandemic that was panicking the population. Now, 67 years later, scientists are hustling to disseminate various COVID-

19 inoculations to control, or collapse, another ungovernable disease. According to History.com, "Salk found that polio had as many as 125 strains of three basic types, and that an effective vaccine needed to combat all three. By growing samples of the polio virus and then deactivating, or 'killing' them by adding a chemical called formalin, Salk developed his vaccine, which was able to immunize without infecting the patient." The disease was eradicated in 1979. For more information, the Grateful American Book Prize recommends "Polio (Deadly Diseases & Epidemics)," by Alan Hecht. "The Greatest of All Time" On February 25, 1964, a 22-year-old newcomer to boxing, by the name of Cassius Clay, catapulted to the world heavyweight champion. He snatched the

title from Sonny Liston in the seventh round of a "David and Goliath" match in Miami Beach, Florida. The odds were against Clay; Liston was the 8 to 1 favorite, but that didn't faze the cocky challenger who predicted his victory in the eighth round, bragging that he would "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." It took him six rounds to win the title in the seventh, when Liston conceded defeat. Young people might not "recognize" Cassius Clay; that's because he became "Muhammed Ali", after he joined the African American Muslim group, the Nation of Islam. The Website Quora calls Ali "the greatest boxer ever," having won 56 out of his 61 bouts during his 20-year career that ended abruptly in 1984 when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. He

BLANDFORD

Special town meeting for bylaw changes, fund transfers Feb. 22

By Mary Kronholm

BLANDFORD — There is a Special Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. at the town office building.

The first 11 articles on the warrant have to do with transferring funds to balance accounts.

The next two are general bylaw changes. Article 12 corrects the language for the purpose of depositing Board of Health fees properly and Article 13 adjusts upwards the dollar amount of a bond for logging trucks carting heavy loads over town roads so said roads can be repaired if necessary.

The remaining articles are for changes to the town’s Zoning Bylaws. These warrant articles cover enforcement, penalty, permits and exemptions. They spell out the formation, powers and rules and regulations for the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Planning Board Chairman Michael Hutchins said the changes are primarily “to recodify, and therefore amend, the Zoning Bylaw to make the Bylaw easier for users to navigate, simplify and update language, and provide better structure for predictability and flexibility in both the interests of current use and future adaptability”

According to Hutchins, this will be accomplished by reorganizing and

renumbering portions of the Zoning Bylaw to enhance accessibility and adaptability; updating and clarifying the purpose and authority of the Zoning Bylaw to clearly state the Town’s legal and factual premises for zoning regulations; providing consistency with present State law; eliminating redundant or unnecessary provisions; making amendments such as correcting spelling and typographical errors, and eliminating or updating outdated statutory references; revising and clarifying Zoning Bylaw administrative provisions; updating the sign section of the Bylaw and adding new criteria for Special Permit approval.

A special permit is generally required

when a proposed use, due to its size or external impacts, needs greater scrutiny by the Town and may require special conditions to mitigate its impact. A variance is required if you want to change your property (dimensionally, not in use) in a way that is generally prohibited by the Zoning Bylaws and therefore requires an “exception”. The applicant must show a hardship imposed by the ordinance which is caused by a unique condition of the lot or structure, and the hardship is owing to circumstances relating to the soil conditions, shape, or topography of the land or structure and especially affecting the land or structures, but not affecting generally the zoning district in which it is located.

North St. water main break fixed within one day

BLANDFORD — There was a major water main break on Thursday, Feb. 4, which was repaired on Friday, Feb. 5. Apparently, an abandoned service on North Street had rotted away, according to Water Department Superintendent Gordon Avery.

That section of the water line is pressurized and Avery said what brought the problem to the Water Department’s attention was the dramatic increase in water use,

which was actually water loss.

“The usage increased to 140,000 gallons of water, which is extremely high,” said Avery, adding that after the repair dropped to approximately 50,000 gallons a day.

Notification was sent out both on line and via a reverse 911 telephone call. Unfortunately the notice was not received via telephone by all residents.

“Some households are not connected electronically or if the telephone numbers have changed, or service has changed from landline to cellphone only, that information must be updated,” said Avery.

He urged residents who did not receive the reverse 911 telephone call to update their contact information with Town Administrator Joshua A. Garcia at 413-848-4279.

BFD reminds residents to clear hydrants

BLANDFORD — The Water Department reminds residents who have water hydrants on their property to please clear the snow from around them. This is important to remember in case of any emergency. Residents are also reminded that there is a fine for leaving snow in the middle of the road when plowing driveways.

COMMONS

interested landscape design professionals from eight different firms interested in presenting ideas to enhance the Town Commons area. Voters approved funding for the project at last year’s Annual Town Meeting and the Town received a grant to work with Franklin Regional Council of Governments for seeking and procuring ideas from possible designers.

The idea is for these landscape designers to craft a plan that encompasses the entire area of the Town Commons.

This area is located across an area that starts with a triangle space in front of the town garage, between Route 23 and North Blandford Road known as Veterans’ Park at Town Commons. The Commons extends across North Blandford Road up the hill behind, and includes the Historical Society to the first

driveway of the cemetery. From there, it crosses North Street to The White Church and extends back down to Route 23.

The original area was established in the 1740s and included the burying ground and measured 10 acres. The cemetery is now in the charge of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners.

Veterans’ Park at Town Commons is used sometimes for honoring a specific veteran who has died, but primarily for Memorial Day Observations. There is a podium, chairs for participants, area for musicians and residents who have come to view the ceremony, all on the triangle area. Many residents and visitors also locate on the bank on North Blandford Road, so this is an area to consider in terms of use. It is overgrown and areas are rife with poison ivy.

There is concern for the location of the cannon and the cannon balls. Should they be closer together? Relocation must not constrict or inhibit wreath placing or monument viewing.

The shrubs located so as to serve as a backdrop or a frame for the monuments, are overgrown and the committee formed to consider how to approach the project asked if the shrubs should be removed, and if so, they should be replaced with slow-growing ornamentals, thus preserving not only access to the monuments but also their care and viewing. There is also concern for possible additional monuments for subsequent veterans’ actions and care should be given to design (shape, size etc.) and location.

The bank on North Street needs

attention; cleanup at the very least.

The area from the Historical Society building to the cemetery, where there is an historical marker indicating the location of the first Meeting House, is also in need of attention. At the very least, it needs clearing of new underbrush growth in the pines. The town approved, in the late 1740s, a provision for clearing out the underbrush and maintaining a walkway between the schoolhouse, now the Historical Society, and the old Meeting House. No trees can be cut down on Town Commons land except by vote of the town.

The designers might consider upgrading the pathway and perhaps include lighting that would leave no carbon footprint and making certain the area is wheelchair accessible.

from page 1

WORTHINGTON

Vaccine information for residents

WORTHINGTON — The town has received many inquiries about getting the Covid-19 Vaccine. The current state guidance can be found on the Massachusetts State Web Site at www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine.

On Monday, Feb. 1, people age 75 or older are eligible to make appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations. There is no date set yet for the next group — people 65 or older or people with two or more comorbidities. The vaccines themselves continue in short supply.

At this time, there are two regional COVID vaccination clinics in Hampshire County — The Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst or The Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton.

To register visit a link on the city websites: www.amherstcovid19.org or www.northamptonma.gov/vaccineclinics. Additional clinics will be scheduled

during the coming weeks based upon weekly federal and state allotments and will follow the phased guidelines as defined by The Department of Public Health.

They will also be offering the second dose of the Moderna vaccine on or after 28 days later to anyone who receives their first dose at our clinics. If individuals need assistance with online registration, please call 413-587-1219 for Northampton or 413-259-2425 for Amherst and leave a detailed message. A health department representative will get back to you within two business days.

Please note that the vaccine is free to individuals and is being provided to the states by the federal government. Sites can bill for a small administration fee to cover the cost of running clinic and insurance information will be requested. However, no person will be turned away due to lack of insurance.

Free pre-K info meeting March 4

WORTHINGTON — R.H. Conwell Elementary School will host an information Zoom meeting on Thursday, March 4 to discuss free pre-school.

Free pre-school will be offered from 8:30 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. Offerings include art, music, and physical education.

“Both Gateway and New Hingham are not charging for preschool,” said Principal and Superintendent Gretchen Morse-Dobosz. “So, we’re, for fiscal 2022, using existing faculty and offsetting the cost with school choice funds. I’m very excited. The committee was incredibly thrilled philosophically around the idea of supporting free preschool.”

The informational meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. on March 4. To sign-up for the meeting, email frovatti@hr-k12.org.

R.H. Conwell Elementary School is committed to teaching and giving the best experience to young children. Students will participate in outdoor learning by exploring the woods, searching for tadpoles in the stream, and getting their hands dirty in our school garden.

Applications for students from all towns will be accepted. Priority will be given to Worthington residents and siblings of Conwell school students. Any questions may be directed to frovatti@hr-k12.org or 413-238-5856.

HISTORY

from page 5

has been called one of the most significant and celebrated figures of the 20th century and one of the greatest boxers of all time. Indeed, as President George W. Bush put it when he presented Ali with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in November of 2005, “Only a few athletes are ever known as the greatest in their sport, or in their time. But when you say, ‘The Greatest of All Time’ is in the room, everyone knows who you mean.”

Muhammad Ali, boxer, activist, entertainer and philanthropist, passed away on June 3, 2016.

The Grateful American Book Prize recommends “The Greatest: Muhammad Ali” by Walter Dean Myers.

History Matters is a biweekly feature courtesy of The Grateful American Book Prize, which is given to children’s books that emphasize the importance of American history.

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CHESTER

Morning commute becomes a hoot

CHESTER — Jason Ellershaw was on his way to another day working the town roads at the Highway Department when he spotted an owl along the side of Route 20 on Wednesday, Feb. 10.

Pulling over, Ellershaw found the owl appeared to have suffered a wing injury and called for backup from the Massachusetts Environmental Police. With the nearest assistance coming from two hours away, Ellershaw hunkered down to keep the winged hunter company and warm.

“I backed up and he couldn’t fly. I stopped and realized he probably had a broken wing,” Ellershaw said. “I ended up getting a blanket after talking to the EPL...and put it over the owl just to kind of calm it down. I sat right next to it and it was perfectly calm. I stayed right next to it the whole time.”

During the wait, several passersby stopped to check if everything was okay for the unusual pair sitting on the side of the road.

“I was like ‘yeah, I’m just sitting here with the owl,’” Ellershaw said.

Officer Andre Quieroga arrived on the scene and to take the owl to a tired Environmental Police officer who helps with rehabilitation for injured animals.

“The Environmental Police was phenomenal. Super nice guy, he actually taught me a lot about the owl itself,” Ellershaw said. “I’m hoping it does well. I think it will. It didn’t seem like there was anything wrong except for the wing. I’m hoping it gets back up there.”



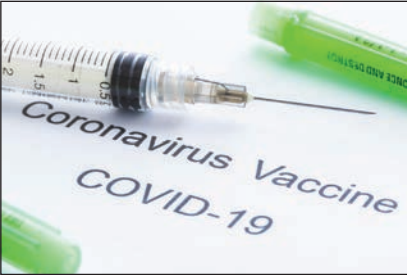
Jason Ellershaw of the Chester Highway Department helped protect an injured owl along Route 20 on Wednesday, Feb. 10.

Submitted photo by Jason Ellershaw

Vaccinations available for seniors, info available online

CHESTER — Town residents 75 and older are now eligible to register for COVID-19 vaccinations in Northampton. In addition, Chester residents 65 and older with two or more co-morbidities are able to get on the wait list.

For more information, visit www.northamptonma.gov/2219/COVID-19-Vaccination-Clinics or townofchester.net.



READY TO PROTECT AND SERVE



From left, Chester Selectmen John Baldasaro and Barbara Huntoon, Chester-Blandford Police Chief Tammy Weidhaas, Blandford Selectman Eric McVey, and Chester Selectman Richard Holzman pose for a quick photo after Weidhaas’ formal swearing in ceremony at the Chester Town Hall on Thursday, Feb. 4.



New Chester-Blandford Police Chief Tammy Weidhaas was sworn in at a formal ceremony with an invite-only audience at the Chester Town Hall after the original Feb. 1 ceremony was postponed by inclement weather.

Submitted photos

WATER

cy, and effectiveness of the water system. This includes fixing the sometimes discolored water, which can be yellow or brown. The water is safe to drink, but Gullick said discolored water feeds the concern that it isn’t.

“The problem with colored water is nobody wants to believe it’s safe and I agree with that,” Gullick said. “We want to be a regional leader in rural drinking water supply with our customers having high confidence and satisfaction in the quality of the water.”

Gullick’s plan has 21 strategies he feels will address the four main goal areas the town needs to improve — leadership and management, operational optimization, fiscal responsibility, and communication.

To consistently deliver reliable, high-quality water, Gullick recommends the town install supervisory control and data acquisition trends, a system designed to monitor all parameters, conduct semi-annual flushing, conduct an independent audit of the treatments processes and implement any necessary improvements, and consider installing two systems to remove trihalomethanes and manganese. Gullick explained removing the manganese by installing oxidation/filtration and cleaning the

pipes will remove the discoloring of the water.

“If you commit to this vision and this mission, and work through these strategies and when you get through all that we’re going to get some really good water,” Gullick said. “It’s going to be safe; it’s going to be clean. I believe it’s going to be clear in color. As far as we can tell it’s definitely manganese that’s causing that. We’ll clean the pipes out too.”

The crux of Gullick’s plan is to have the Highway Department take over as the town’s water operator. One department employee would be the designated “leader” and take on the operator role. They would have to train daily with long-time town Water Operator Bernard St. Martin and obtain the necessary treatment and operating licenses. Gullick said there’s a “fast track” for the operator licenses, which can be done in a year. The end goal will also establish a succession plan as the Highway Department will be able to train new members within its ranks. Carl Baldasaro and Jason Ellershaw have both expressed interest in learning the job.

Selectman John Baldasaro said he was concerned this plan may not work

if St. Martin doesn’t communicate. Baldasaro said there have been issues communicating with St. Martin in the past. His concerns were echoed by Water Improvement Committee member Bob Daley.

Selectman Barbara Huntoon explained St. Martin does his job well, but he isn’t the most communicative person. Training the Highway Department members will also give the town a succession plan for when St. Martin retires, with trained operators ready to step in.

“He does his job. We have a hard time talking with him, but he has agreed to talk with the two guys interested in learning,” she said.

“My biggest concern is cooperation of the primary operator right now. That has been a sticking point for a while and I think we need to come up with a strategy for how we’re going to address that,” Baldasaro said.

“There are also things the current operator knows we need to learn. I’m certainly hopeful Mr. St. Martin will help,” Gullick said. “The Highway Department needs to get licensed. They need to learn. If he’s not willing to train them, that’s not acceptable.”

The other major hurdle is cost. Gullick’s identified strategies are esti-

mated to cost \$135,000. It also does not include costs for facility repairs such as needed for Filter 1, staff time costs, contracts for certified operators if needed, and the design, permitting, or construction of the aeration or manganese removal systems.

The board made the decision to accept the plan with a contingency that funding is secured whether it be from the town, a grant, or loan.

“I think it’s something we need to do. We don’t have the money,” Baldasaro said. “We have to go to special town meeting to get any money to get started. I don’t feel like we can tonight say ‘let’s get started’ because we don’t have the money to get started.”

“It’s a great proposal and it needs to be done. The people of town deserve safe water and water that doesn’t have odor or a color,” said Chairman Barbara Huntoon.

“This is a very thorough study and Rich has been very on top of this,” added Selectman Richard Holzman. “I think we’re getting a fix on what’s going on now.”

Gullick’s full presentation on the water system and his proposed solutions is available on the town website, townofchester.net.

from page 1

RUSSELL

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



The town of Russell welcomed its newest business to the community with the opening of the doors for Dollar General at 45 Blandford Stage Road on Thursday, Feb. 11, bringing a variety of product and food offerings to the downtown area. Photo by Shelby Macri



Send Us Your Photos!

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Ice fish at WHOA on Saturday

RUSSELL —Woronoco Heights Outdoor Adventures, or WHOA, will be featuring ice fishing as one of its feature events during their monthly opening of the Moses Scout Reservation on Saturday, Feb. 20.

Ice on the reservation’s 90-acre lake is forecast to be more than thick enough to support the largest of groups. Heading up the Woronoco Heights Outdoor Adventures’ ice fishing staff will be Craig Mannix and his Eagle Scout son Jack. In addition to running the WHOA fishing program, Mannix also heads up the Western Massachusetts Council’s Fishing Committee, which offers a variety of Scout fishing programs and events throughout the year. With over 30 years of ice fishing experience Craig, and the rest of his dedicated staff, will be available to show even the most novice fisherman how to catch the big ones under the ice. For those folks without the proper ice fishing equipment, Mannix and his crew will have plenty of “pop-ups” and other tools necessary available for use out on the frozen lake. WHOA Director Mia Santos-Izyk added ice fishing is not the only activity event scheduled for Feb. 20.

Additionally, there will be snow shoeing and mountain biking (if biking, COVID-19 regulations require guests to bring their own helmet), orienteering, escape challenges and scavenger hunt bingo and more are on the day’s agenda. If Mother Nature cooperates with the weather, there is a possibility of trips out to the Top O’ The Hill Maple “sugar shack,” where visitors are rewarded for their efforts with the Top O’ The Hills’ hospitality and samples of their sweet, freshly boiled, maple syrup.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions the registration cost for all these activities remains at \$10 per person, regardless of age. The Feb. 20 activities all commence at 9 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. Regarding the COVID-19 regulations, Santos-Izyk advises all participants and WHOA staff that various modifications to the usual WHOA programs are still in place.

Participants will be required to pre-register and prepay on-line at; www.wmascouting.org/WHOA202101. No walk-ins or onsite registrations will be permitted. Additionally, registrations will be limited, and participants may be asked to assemble into groups of 12 or fewer individuals. Typical social distancing will be practiced with mandatory face coverings required at all times whether outside or in enclosed areas.

A full list of WHOA’s COVID-19 modifications is available on its website at www.wmascouting.org/WHOA.

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 <p>2009 Pontiac Vibe AWD 4 dr Wagon only 84,000 miles \$6,599</p>	 <p>2013 Toyota Tacoma X Cab, 1 Owner, SR5 Pkg, 5 Speed, Only 45,000 miles \$15,955</p>	 <p>2008 Subaru Outback 2.5i AWD 4dr Wagon 138,000 \$4,995</p>
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The Russell Public Library has a wide variety of selections for all ages to enjoy. Submitted photo

New library offerings for February

RUSSELL — The Russell Public Library has a couple new offerings for patrons to enjoy while sheltering inside from the winter snow and cold fronts.

“The Paper Bag Princess,” written by Robert Munsch, is an anniversary edition keepsake of one of the best-loved picture books that has reached many families during story time.

“Noodlehead Nightmares” by Tedd Arnold is an adventure about the Noodlehead Brothers Mac and Mac. This graphic novel is colorful and humorous, plus it comes with an activity pack and an artist bag to make your own magic story.

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

CHANCE

from page 1

model. This would mean remote students in a full remote district would be able to play sports; one committee member argued remote students shouldn't have their physical activity options cut back just because the school isn't meeting in person, and asked that sports be allowed regardless of the remote model.

"The motion was to allow students to participate in athletics even if the district was in a fully-remote learning model. As the school committee had previously only allowed participation if we were 'in-person', this new motion was required if students were to play, even if they were members of a co-op team," Hopson said. "That motion failed, leaving the restriction of no athletics if we are in a fully-remote learning model."

Many attendees of the meeting wanted to chime in on the discussion, including Student Representative Brian Forgue, who voiced his concerns of allowing remote students to interact in-person while the school district is shut down.

Forgue said that allowing students to be in close quarters with each other while they're not allowed at school would be putting more students at risk, and could cause a mass outbreak of the virus. Forgue said he and his family members had already been exposed to a close contact and that was troubling enough, and it'd be irresponsible to allow remote students to interact in physical activities especially when the entire district is

remote. Several School Committee members had similar thoughts and concerns and expressed that they'd rather be in-person when allowing sports to continue.

"Our Fall Two sports will take place as long as Gateway can be in a hybrid learning model. Fall sports will not take place in Fall Two because both soccer teams participated in nine out of 10 games," Bonenfant said. "Boys Cross Country competed in four out of five races, and Girl's Cross Country competed in three out of five race. None of those teams lost 50% of their seasons."

Additionally, the MIAA has moved the start of Spring sports to April 26 so there is no interference or crossover with Fall Two.

The committee members agreed that the new fall season will benefit their student athletes and clarified the motion before accepting it.

"I don't believe the motion was changed, but it was clarified that if the COVID-19 positivity rates were such that we would have been in school during vacation week, that athletes could continue to participate in the current winter season," Hopson said.

This won't affect basketball players as they will start when they return from break, though it allowed the co-op Hockey players to participate next week as numbers dropped below a 5% positivity rate.



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WILLIAMSBURG

Marijuana RFI reissued, Main Street interest

By Peter Spotts

WILLIAMSBURG — The Selectboard reissued the Request for Information for prospective marijuana businesses in town after receiving another inquiry for a potential retail establishment at 23 Main Street.

The board had previously put out an RFI last fall after having multiple inquiries, but received no responses. Kot Kasom was at the board meeting on Thursday, Feb. 11 to express interest in pursuing a business and the need for an RFI to get the process moving.

“We’re looking at a site location on 23 Main Street. We’re negotiating a lease right now,” Kasom said. “It’s a great driving through point to Northampton and the surrounding towns. I’m hoping you guys would put out the RFI soon because

it does take time to get through the process.”

Kasom said if an RFI came out Feb. 11, which the board decided to approve, the earliest scenario to open doors wouldn't be until 2022. The prospective location is the Worthington Air Automotive building. Nardi raised a concern about the close proximity to the Anne T. Dunphy School.

"It would take five to six minutes to walk from the school," Nardi said. "I would look into that."

The RFI was issued on Feb. 11 and will be out for 60 days, ending on April 12. For a full copy of the six-page document, visit burgj.org.

Town elections will be moving back to the Town Offices. After being moved to the Anne T. Dunphy School to accommodate the anticipated voter turnout increase

for the presidential election in November, Clerk Brenda Lessard requested to have it moved back to its former home. The board approved the request.

“That’s where they’re normally held,” Nardi said. “The Board of Selectmen voted to move it to Anne T. Dunphy school because of the presidential election and we thought there were going to be a lot of people and, with covid, we wanted to be as safe as possible.”

Nardi said Principal Stacey Jenkins had moved the school schedule to ensure students and staff had the day off and were out of the building for the November election, something which isn't always possible.

“We can’t be in that building when the kids are in there and this is our local election, which is a different size,” Nardi

said. “We did hold our local election here in May at the town offices... [Voters] came in through one door and exited another door. We’ll do that again, but the school is not an option. That’s the bottom line.”

The delayed celebration of the town's 250th anniversary will have to wait a little longer. Nardi said the committee organizing the event has requested to have the celebration postponed until 2022. While it was supposed to happen last summer, COVID-19 forced alterations to the plan.

“They are discussing doing something that would be safe for everyone,” Nardi said. “They’re working on that. They have another meeting scheduled to reveal all their work, things they want to keep going with, and what they can do this year to commemorate our 250th.”

COVID-19 vaccinations available for senior residents

WILLIAMSBURG — The State of Massachusetts is rolling out the COVID-19 vaccinations in three phases. Each phase has eligibility requirements with groups to be vaccinated in priority order. Currently the state is in Phase 1 and is vaccinating clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers, people in long-term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities, emergency responders, congregate care settings and health care workers.

Phase 2 is scheduled to begin sometime in February and will cover vaccinations for people with two or more health conditions that make them high risk for COVID-19 complications, adults 75 years or older, residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing, educators, employees who work in retail, foodservice facilities, public works, and transportation, adults

65 years or older, and individuals with one health condition that puts them at

high risk.

Phase 3 covers the general public —

those not covered in phase 1 or 2 — and is scheduled to begin in April.

At this time, the town is working with state approved regional vaccination sites. As vaccination enters Phase 2 and Phase 3, town officials will communicate with residents eligible under that phase about how best to sign up to get vaccinated. Residents should not sign-up until the state is in the phase under which they are eligible. Residents will be turned away even if they sign up.

Please beware of scam emails, links, and websites regarding vaccinations. For more information, visit www.mass.gov/info-details/when-can-i-get-the-covid-19-vaccine.

In the meantime, please take care, wear a mask, and maintain social distance. Questions may be directed to Board of Health Chair Donna Gibson at 413-268-7421.



PUBLIC NOTICE

**GATEWAY REGIONAL
FY22 SCHOOL BUDGET
PUBLIC HEARING**

In accordance with Chapter 71 Section 38N of the Massachusetts General Law the public hearing for the 2021-2022 Gateway Regional School District budget will be held on **Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom**
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77361840587?pwd=U0VhN2dMZW1kZL3UxczB6RGEyeXFUZz09>,
Meeting
ID: 773 6184 0587,
Passcode: 29s6L6
Reference: Massachusetts Newspapers Publishers Association website:
masspublicnotices.org
02/18/2021

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- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

*Public notice deadlines are Mondays at noon,
Fridays noon for Monday holidays.*

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

News, photo publication policy

As a community newspaper our focus has always been local news. While we try very hard to run upcoming events as a public service whenever space allows, space does not allow us to run an upcoming event repeatedly. Our policy is to limit publication of upcoming events to one article in advance of the event and, space permitting, a second brief reminder article the week prior to an event, and to run those articles in only one section of the paper, and not in multiple sections simultaneously.

All such public service announcements and photos are subject to space limitations and deadlines, therefore publication cannot be guaranteed. Whenever copy for the week exceeds allotted space, news copy will take priority, and public service copy is the first area to be cut. We also reserve the right to edit for style and space, and are under no obligation to print lists of sponsorships, or articles that arrive after deadline, unless time and space allows.

Deadline is Monday at NOON, on holidays it is **Friday at 2 p.m.**



OBITUARY

Elizabeth C. Pelletier, 47

Elizabeth Pelletier, 47, of Gilbertville, unexpectedly passed away on Feb. 7, 2021. She was born in Northampton, and grew up in Palmer, where she attended Palmer Schools, graduating in 1992.

She was a waitress at several area restaurants for many years, most recently, The Whistle Stop and Statz, and made a number of friends among her regular customers. Elizabeth joined the Catholic Church in 1995. Most recently she worshiped at St. Augustine Mission in Gilbertville. Liz is survived by her sons Grant and Mason Pelletier-Biggs of Gilbertville and Cameron Pelletier of Palmer; Phillip Biggs of Gilbertville; her parents Edward Pelletier and his wife Helen of Worthington and Deborah Pelletier of Palmer; her sisters Susannah Pelletier of Reno, NV, and Misty Bernier of Chicago, IL; her grandfather Eugene Bernier of Silver City, NM; her cousin Crystal Burnham of AZ; Jim and Dawn Farquhar of East Longmeadow; Jackie Biggs of Ware, several other cousins, and many friends.

Her sons’ interests were her greatest interest. She supported Mason’s interest in the performing arts, making sure he had dance and guitar lessons, and that he



was able to perform in plays at the Barre Players Theater. She encouraged his successful effort to go to the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts School. Grant’s greatest interests are the Boy Scouts, agricultural mechanics, and machine operations. He attends Smith Vocational Agricultural High School. Liz supported his vocational education, activities, projects, camping trips, and his trip to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. She frequently traveled with Grant and Mason to visit relatives in Arizona and New Mexico. Liz loved animals of all kinds, and at present had three dogs and four cats. She also enjoyed growing flowers. Trips to Rhode Island beaches with the boys were frequent in the summer.

No services are currently planned. Varnum Funeral Home, Inc., 43 East Main Street in West Brookfield is assisting her family with arrangements. An online guestbook is available at varnumfuneralhome.com.

To send flowers to the family or plant a tree in memory of Elizabeth C. Pelletier, please visit www.varnumfuneralhome.com/obituary/Elizabeth-Pelletier/sympathy.

DEATH NOTICE

PELLETIER, ELIZABETH C.
Died Feb. 7, 2021

Country Journal OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.
One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$100, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

OTIS

Library doors nearly open after year of closure

By Kathleen Bort

OTIS — On March 13, 2020, the library closed because there was an emerging virus. A year later with over 475,000 deaths nationally, and approximately 27,127,858 total cases in over 57 National jurisdictions, with at least two vaccines, possibly three, serving the population I am working toward reopening this spring. I know it will not be normal, so I am finding creative and productive ways to address your needs and desires. The CDC released this week, Feb. 15, 2021, the five mitigations for opening classrooms. I look at the Otis Library & Museum as the classroom for the Otis community. When the numbers are down, and Otis is either yellow or green, and the mitigations — mandatory facemasks, physical distancing, washing hands, cleaning facilities, and improving ventilation, and contact tracing, isolation —and quarantine are in place we will be excited to open the library. We are getting ready.

Throughout this year we have added over 200 new books, and audiobooks, more than 50 magazines have been shelved and there are over 100 DVDs for viewing. We will publish and post the complete list of items added since March 2020. This list will be available on the town website and it will be available upon request by contacting 413-269-0109 or kbort@otislibraryma.org, or you can access this by browsing the Otis catalog at catalog@cwmars.org. Soon you will be able to come in and see these items on display; until then simply request them and we will get them to you curbside. Curbside pickup is available Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to noon.

We have learned to reach out differently using zoom sessions, emails, phone conversations, and the town website. We will open with appointments to control the social distancing. Seeing your faces (with masks) and having personal conversations will be refreshing. We look forward to hearing your stories.

We are fortunate to have trustees

that addressed our needs for proper air circulation and purification and for following all safety precautions for the staff, patrons, and other visitors. Through their unanimous endorsement, three Industrial UV 614 Air Purifiers from AIRPURA and one Air Doctor machine have been installed in the building. This investment will allow us to open the library soon.

Our bimonthly story walks hosted by our trustees Donna Rich and Susan Ebitz and South Berkshire Kids worker Anina Carr have provided outdoor family activities that encourage literacy, mindfulness, and wellness. We acknowledge the importance of activities in outdoor spaces and we will continue these activities, and we look forward to adding more.

We received a grant from the American Library Association for the design and implementation of communication sessions to develop an awareness and appreciation of Diversity. Our connections with the new town group Diverse Otis, the Otis Historic Commission, and the Otis Cultural Council will provide more events and

activities for all ages.

We are renewing our museum passes so you can venture out through the area. We want to know what you would like to see, what you want to learn, and what you want to do. Also, it is time to look ahead and plan for the summer. Most of all we want to start sharing our library with you in person.

It has been a time of reflection, examination, and creative planning. We are planning to add learning experiences and workshops. We have learned much, and we realize we have so much more to learn. Remote learning, virtual sessions, and sharing sessions have become today’s communication vehicles. We will share these technologies as we move forward.

Until our dreams to reopen the Otis Library come true please continue to be safe. Wear a facemask even if you have been vaccinated, wash your hands frequently, keep your social distance, stay in your social pods. Remember vaccination is not a get out of jail free card.

Kathleen Bort is the director of the Otis Free Public Library.

Resources now available for hazard mitigation process

OTIS — The town is working to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan and needs the help of residents to make it happen.

The defined mission for the Town of Otis Vulnerability and Hazard Mitigation Plan is “to identify risks both manmade and natural to develop strategies to eliminate or reduce the potential for loss of life, property, infrastructure, cultural, environmental & natural resources of the Town from disasters and to develop sustainable cost-effective actions to mitigate those risks and the impacts of natural or manmade hazards.”

Mitigation goals and objective include identifying the vulnerabilities

and risks throughout the town; developing sustainable and cost effective risk-reduction projects; protect the lives, health, safety and property of town residents; ; protect public services and critical facilities; involve the community to enhance the local capacity to mitigate, prepare for and respond to the impacts of natural hazards; Develop, promote and integrate mitigation action plans; and promote public understanding of and support for hazard mitigation.

For more information, visit townofotisma.com, www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-mvp-program, or www.mass.gov/service-details/local-hazard-mitigation-planning.

Storywalk up through March 2

OTIS — The Farmington River Trail welcomes its newest story walk featuring “Amazing Grace” by Mary Hoffman, which will be on display for the enjoyment of all through Tuesday, March 2. The walk is located in back

of St. Mary’s of the Lake at 48 N. Main St. The next live story walk event will be on Saturday, March 13. For the latest on storywalks and library updates, visit townofotisma.com/category/library-news/.

CUMMINGTON

Library adds limited in-person browsing

CUMMINGTON — In addition to the curbside pickup information below, the Bryant Free Library will now be open Saturday mornings, by appointment and space permitting.

No more than two patrons will be allowed inside at a time. The Bryant Free Library will be open Saturday mornings from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with curbside delivery of books, magazines, DVDs, and more. Curbside items can be ordered by calling Librarian Mark DeMaranville

at 413-634-5400 and leaving a message.

A mask is required when picking up with one transaction at a time. Books will be bagged with names and a return date and will be left out for a designated pick up or a patron may call the library at 413-634-0109 on arrival. Returns can be left in the drop box. The librarian will wear a mask for all interactions with patrons and will use recommended safety precautions when packaging books.

MIDDLEFIELD

MIDDLEFIELD SENIOR CENTER

Lunch is served at the Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail, Middlefield, each Wednesday at noon.

A \$3 donation is suggested. Reservations should be made, and meal choice stated, by calling and leaving a

message at 413-623-9990 the Monday before. Pick-up and delivery are available. The menu on Wednesday, Feb. 24, is orange glazed chicken, steamed broccoli, penne noodles, oatmeal bread, and fresh fruit.

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BECKET

Caucus nominations due by Tuesday, March 16

BECKET — The Annual Town Caucus will be held at Becket Town Hall on Tuesday, April 6, from noon to 7 p.m. to cast ballots for the nomination of candidates.

The following offices need to be filled at the Annual Town Election on May 19, 2021: member, Board of Selectmen, three-year term; member, Board of Health, three-year term; Cemetery Commissioner, three-year term, two members, Finance Committee, three-year term; member, Planning Board, three-year term; two constables,

three-year terms.

Any candidate requesting that his or her name appear on the ballot for the Annual Town Caucus must file a Caucus Nomination Paper with the Town Clerk by 5 p.m. on March 16. No signatures are required and the two persons receiving the highest number of votes cast at the Caucus shall be declared nominated for such office and their names will appear on the Annual Town Election ballot. Please note that if a person receives less than 8% of the votes of those voting for candidates for such office at a Caucus,

they shall not be declared nominated.

If someone plans to run for office in 2021, but choose to forego the Caucus, they must obtain nomination papers from the Town Clerk's office by 5 p.m. on March 24. At least 20 signatures of registered voters in the Town of Becket are required and the last day and hour to submit nomination papers to the Registrars of Voters for certification is 5 p.m. on April 9, in order for the name to appear on the ballot for the Annual Town Election.

The Town of Becket Annual Town

Meeting is currently scheduled for May 8 and the Annual Town Election is currently scheduled for May 15. The dates for Caucus, Town Meeting, and Town Election are subject to change due to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

All candidates must be registered voters in the Town of Becket.

For further information, please contact Town Clerk George Roberts at 413-623-8934 ext. 111. Voter registration forms are available at Becket Town Hall, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

HEARING

from page 1

why they're pursuing this project. With several potential proposals before them, including a solar farm abutting Skyline Ridge and larger marijuana operations, they feel the proposal from Brian Vincent and Michael Goodenough is the best fit for everyone involved.

"I've been here for 58 years. I love it. My father gave me this piece of land and this house, that was no longer being a farm, for me to have and for my sister to have...This was our inheritance, this land," Adrienne Metcalf said. "This is an incredible opportunity with Michael and Brian. They're going to be tucked away on a relatively small piece of land behind the hill and behind Skyline Ridge. No threat."

Resident Arthur Telegen said he was concerned about the portrayal of this project being accepted because it's a lesser evil than other potential projects. He also asked the Planning Board if there can be a contingency in the permit, if the board votes in favor of it, to not allow the Metcalfs to add anything else to the property beyond this facility.

"If I have my choice, I'm not going to have a marijuana manufacturing facility down the road," Telegen said. "What bothers me more about tonight's meeting though is the suggestion that you should approve this because the alternatives are worse. There's nothing that I've heard that would prevent those things from occurring anyway... I would rather have the board disapprove, but if they're going to approve, then it should be approved with conditions on that land."

Planning Board Chair Robert

Ronzio said the project itself can have conditions put on it, but if the Metcalfs wanted to farm hemp on their land, which is 97 acres, it's within their right as it's in an agricultural zone. The town does not differentiate between residential and commercial or industrial for businesses. The board has discussed looking into changing this, if it's something residents would want to do, but the time-consuming process would take place after the current proposal has been voted on and would not impact this issue.

While the concerns of residents around the potential odor impact on the surrounding community and noise from the facility were echoed by many residents, Goodenough did not take kindly to letters he said he has received from residents calling into question the integrity of his staff, which includes former police officers, teachers, first responders and nurses.

"We are not a dispensary. There is no increased foot traffic. We are a small business. We will not stand to be discriminated against. We have a right to have a business," he said. "Don't question my team. We give everything we possibly can and will continue to. We are a great neighbor to have and we want to be a great neighbor to you."

Resident Laurie Friedman raised her concerns about two of Goodenough's facilities, located in Eastburg and Pomfret, Conn., potentially owing over \$9,000 in back taxes each.

"The only positive thing I can see this owner will bring to Becket is to pay revenue, to pay taxes, and it looks like

the taxes haven't been paid at your other facilities," she said.

Ronzio said the board will take the data under consideration and he read the same data Friedman did, but cautioned it could be erroneous, and the board hasn't verified its authenticity yet.

Goodenough said the current company loans are held by Farm Credit East, which keeps money in escrow to pay the taxes. One of the properties is also still in a pending land grab debate and won't have its taxes activated until its resolved.

"End of story we pay our state and federal taxes. Always have and our employees too," Goodenough said. "Those taxes are held in escrow right now within our current loan."

Resident Harold Ware asked the board to consult a local expert to do an environmental impact statement on how the facility may impact the water table. He also encouraged the board to get Tetrahydra Agtek to put in writing the penalties they would receive for not following regulations. Vincent said the penalties are already in place from the Cannabis Control Commission at the state level. He provided an example of one company already being fined \$250,000 for using the wrong pesticide.

"That's what we are bound to follow," Vincent said. "They are very thorough on how they do their investigations and their reports."

In regard to odor, Vincent again stressed the points he made at the hearing last month about using evergreen trees as wind buffers to mitigate the smell. He said studies have determined

1,000 feet is the range necessary to break up any odors that may drift from the outdoor field.

"It [the wind break] dissipates the air before it gets off the property. I've seen it be very successful. The evergreens absorb a lot of the smell and it dissipates a lot of the odor coming off the marijuana plant," he said. "The United States Department of Agriculture and Farm Service Agency have been doing studies and that is the reason they defined 1,000 feet as the border for hemp and wind break for if situations arise."

When asked about their operations in Connecticut, Goodenough said he has 20 farmers they helped go to market this past year and "not a single one" had a complaint or a complaint from other residents near the farms about the smell.

Board member Ann Krawet expressed a number of concerns as well. In addition to voicing concerns residents had made, she also questioned the need for a traffic study to determine the impact before voting. Goodenough pointed out a traffic study for the businesses' impact won't have meaning without a baseline study to compare it to.

"I take your point," Krawet said. "We should do our own traffic study before approving the application."

She added later, "The neighborhood character is residential and that's a big concern of all the residents who have their homes [near there]. I'm not totally satisfied at this point."

The hearing will continue the discussion on March 10 at 7 p.m.

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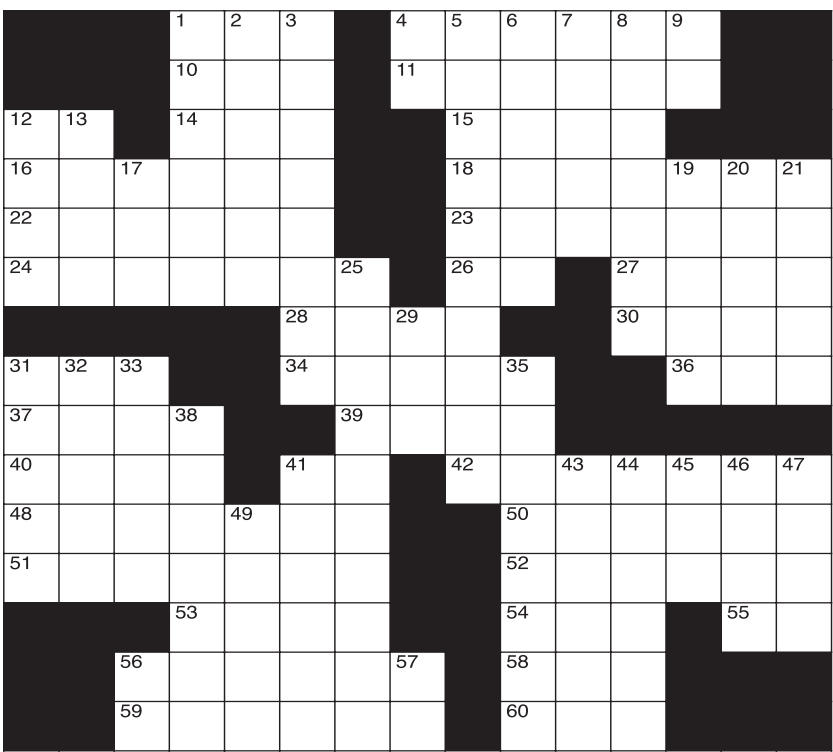
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Big tech firm
4. Picked
10. Type of whale
11. A woman of refinement
12. New England state
14. Common gibbon
15. Tall coniferous tree
16. State capital
18. Making a liquid muddy
22. Vinegary
23. Peninsula
24. Thee
26. Atomic #55
27. Used in units of measurement
28. Welsh female name
30. Arab ruler title
31. One's mother

34. Trap
36. Soviet Socialist Republic
37. Assn. of oil-producing countries
39. Holy fire
40. Emit coherent radiation
41. Atomic #81
42. Orthodox Jewish college
48. Herbs
50. Ran after
51. Begin again
52. Named
53. Barbary sheep
54. Unwell
55. Postscript
56. Drivers
58. One point east (clockwise) of due north
59. Prim
60. A facility

CLUES DOWN

1. Small islands
2. Skullcap
3. Unexplained events
4. One hundredth of a meter
5. Beloved baseball announcer
6. Repulsive
7. Northern European languages
8. Match or surpass
9. Northeast
12. Chew the fat
13. Innovative industry
17. Land to put down to grass
19. Products
20. Nostril
21. Surprise Icelandic politician
25. Conclusive acts
29. Inform on
31. Grinding tooth
32. Keep up
33. Tablelands
35. Raising
38. Mythical creature
41. Hums
43. Mountain in Antarctica
44. Neighborhood in Manhattan
45. Distinctive practice
46. Vice president
47. Contributes to
49. Small bones
56. Oil company
57. Empire State

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20
Aries, you are feeling ambitious this week, so it might be time to try a new hobby or other interest. Write down your goals and see if any align with potential hobbies.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, clear your social schedule in favor of some quiet time at home. Such a respite can provide a great opportunity to reflect and make a new plan.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23
Even though the holidays are over you may still want to continue the celebration, Libra. Find a way to socialize with friends or family in a responsible manner.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, even if you don't say much, there is a lot of chatter going on in your head. Take some time to find a quiet place and meditate for a while.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21
Some nice surprises are likely to come your way, especially in your private life. Enjoy every moment as it unfolds and express your appreciation when applicable.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, you have a goal to meet someone new and there's a good chance you will discover that person in the days to come. Accept the possibility that hopes and dreams can come true.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you may be finished with the business that made last month hectic. Now you are ready to start a new chapter. A calm period is ahead.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18
Sometimes you just have to take a risk without vetting all of the possible outcomes, Aquarius. If it feels like it's a good time to make a change, embrace the opportunity.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, a potentially lucrative opportunity may present itself in the days to come. Consider all of your options and give equal though to all of them.

VIRGO

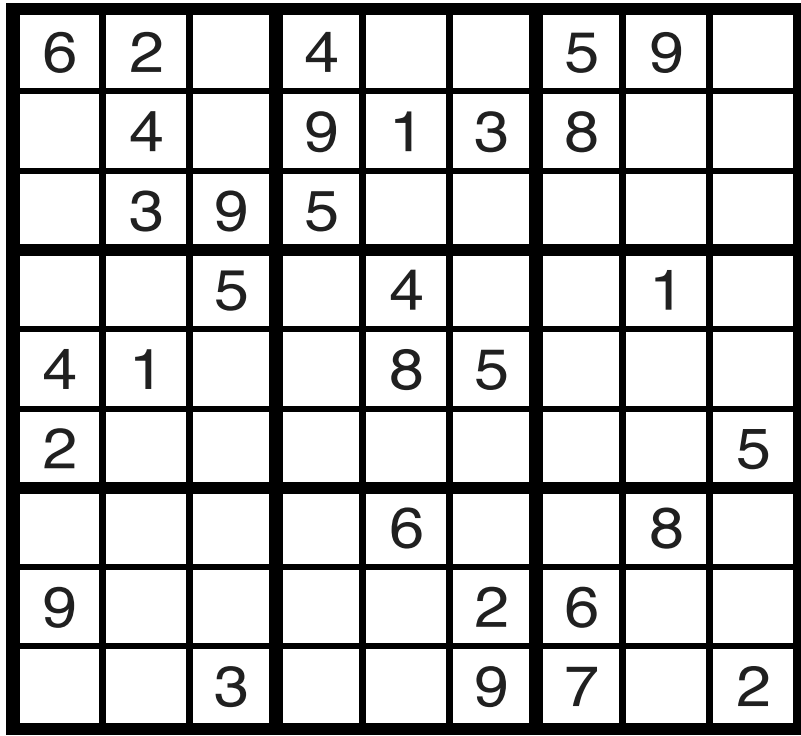
Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, friends often end up filling familial roles. Even though a person may not be related by blood, certain friends can be relied upon through thick and thin.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21
Gemini, you are likely to upstage everyone else this week because people simply cannot get enough of your magnetic personality. If you grow weary of the limelight, take a break.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20
This week is the ideal opportunity to show strength and exhibit your organizational skills, Pisces. Don't be afraid to think big.



SUDOKU

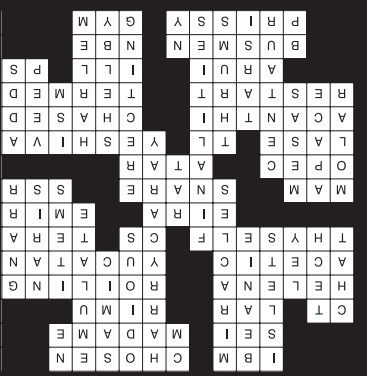
Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

answers

2	4	7	6	5	8	3	9	1
1	5	9	2	3	7	4	8	6
6	8	3	4	9	1	2	5	7
5	9	4	1	6	3	8	7	2
7	3	6	5	8	2	9	1	4
8	1	2	7	4	9	5	6	3
4	7	1	9	2	5	6	3	8
9	2	8	3	1	6	7	4	5
3	6	5	8	7	4	1	2	9



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WESTHAMPTON

Information and resources for COVID-19 vaccinations

WESTHAMPTON — Information on COVID-19 vaccinations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition is provided by the Westhampton Board of Health.

The town has several links on the town website, westhampton-ma.us, to help residents make an appointment for a vaccine, if eligible.

Phase 2 started on Feb. 1. The first

priority group of the phase are people 75 and over. For more information on phases, visit www.mass.gov/info-details/when-can-i-get-the-covid-19-vaccine.

Residents can get vaccinated at the Northampton Senior Center. They may also choose to go to the UMass Campus Center. A map is available at www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-locations-for-individuals-in-eligible-groups-and-phases.

To book an appointment in Northampton, visit www.northamptonma.gov/2219/COVID-19-Vaccination-Clinics.

To book an appointment at UMass, visit www.umass.edu/coronavirus/vaccine.

For those who do not have computer capability or need help with booking an appointment, a call connection can be arranged through the Highland Valley Elder Services in

Florence. Call 413-585-2000.

When booking an appointment, a Vaccination Attestation form must be filled out. This form may be at the clinic or site, over the phone, or online at www.mass.gov/forms/covid-19-massachusetts-vaccination-attestation-form. A driver's license is not required.

Please keep in mind that vaccine is in short supply and it may take a long time to book an appointment.

COMPLEX

from page 1

the time spent in the STM for everyone's safety. The project carries an estimated cost of \$4.3 million, which includes the demolition of the current Fire Station at 48 Stage Road.

"The point of this meeting is to give people all the information and let them ask questions, so they know about the specifics before the special town meeting," Assistant Fire Chief Steve Holt said. "I'm encouraging people to look at these plans and just call for me if they have a question. I'll answer it and make sure they understand what we're trying to do here."

Holt is a member of the Safety Complex Building Committee and has been working on this project for at least three years, including when the town approved the vote at Annual Town Meeting, but failed to win the ballot vote years ago. The plans of the building have changed since the last time residents needed to vote on it, and there's information available on the plans and an informational video on the town website.

meeting to reduce the amount of time people need to spend outside. There have been postcards sent out to residents recently, listing the dates and types of informational meetings; next they will send out informational flyers.

Dowling has shown the areas that this year's budget will go to according to past and projected budgets, showing that the town can afford this project this year. Dowling added the town has saved up money in accounts for this project, it's been on the Capitol Plan for at least eight years, and the costs for the project are lower than ever this year.

"We have done everything we think we need too to do this. We planned for this, saved for this, had audits done for this, we're ready," Dowling said. "I wouldn't believe it if I didn't know the information, but we can do this. We did a lot to be able to afford this."

The new building gives garage space to the fire department for their current fire engines, as well as enough space for additional engines that could be needed in the

A diagram presented at the meeting outlines the different rooms and features the new Public Safety Complex will have for the Fire and Police Departments. Photos by Shelby Macri

"The point of this meeting is to give people all the information and let them ask questions, so they know about the specifics before the special town meeting,"

– Assistant Fire Chief Steve Holt

Selectboard Chair Philip Dowling and Holt made the video to explain the necessity of the new building as well as highlight the important aspects of what the new building will contain. A combination of the video, Zoom information meetings, and in-person meetings ensures residents have multiple opportunities to learn about the project before voting. While Holt and Dowling expect people to ask some questions at the STM, they want people to do their research and learn about the project beforehand. The meeting will be held outside in the High School Parking lot; there will be chairs for those who want to sit by the speaker system and look at information while at the meeting, and room for cars to park and listen that way.

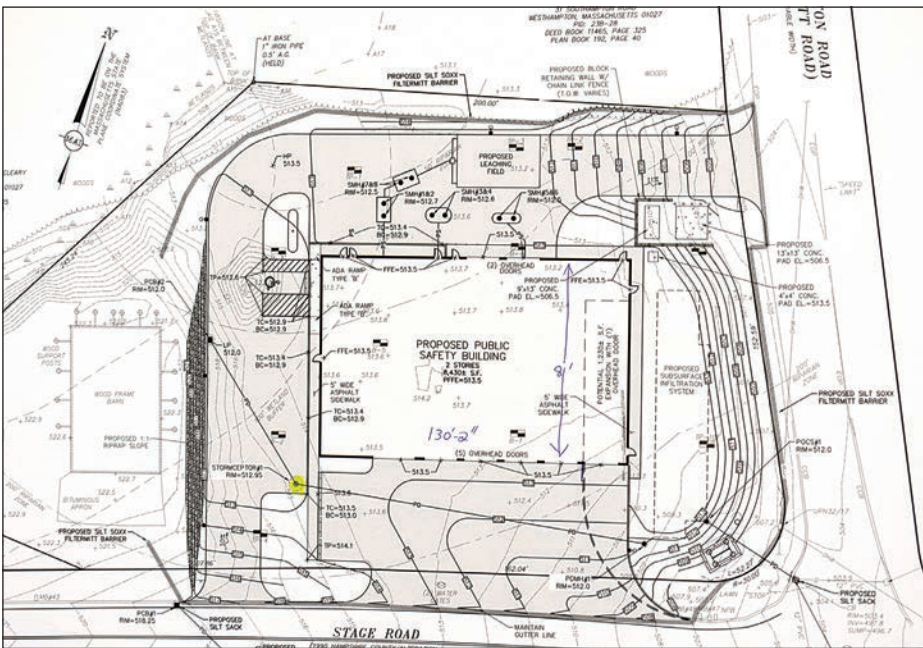
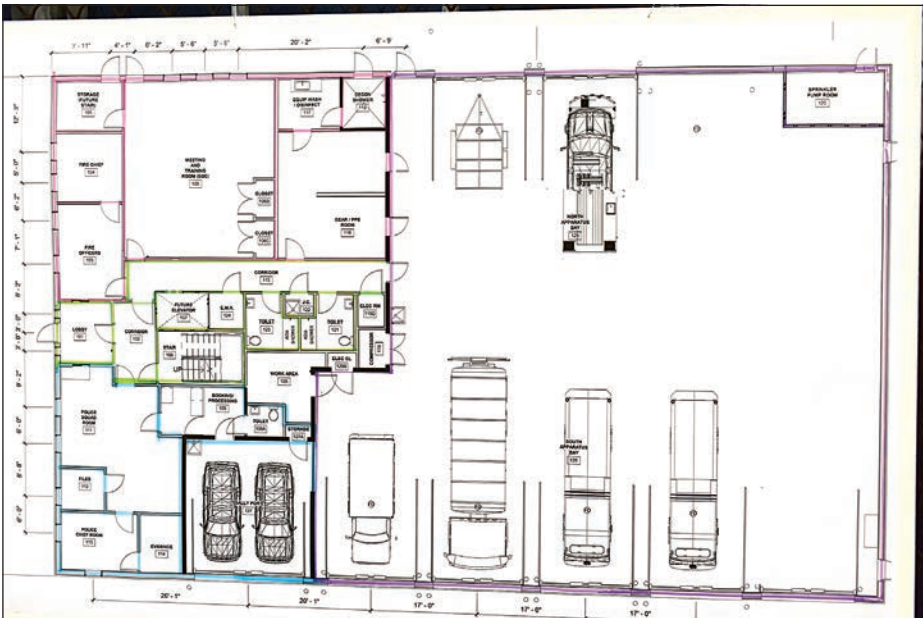
Holt said that the speaker system will be turned up loud to project across the parking lot to those in their cars, and there will be two independent microphones for residents to comment. There will be foam guards on the microphones, with an attendee to switch the foam guards after each speaker. They are complying with safety precautions for COVID-19 and are hoping that people will be knowledgeable before the

future. There is also a completely separate Police garage, this allows the police to work in their own area and ensures that evidence will be propol stored away from the Fire Department. The Police garage can fit two cruisers and connects to the Police office space in the front portion of the building. There is also a separate Fire Department office and locker space, as well as a mutual space in the middle for stairs and restrooms.

The garage for the Fire Department has to be taller due to the size of the trucks; because the building needed to be taller at one area already, it was proposed to raise the entirety of the building to add a second floor above the offices. This second floor includes a mechanical room, water room, electrical room, and IT Office, and a future elevator area. The rest of the upper floor is empty, to allow room for future offices that could be needed. These offices could be for the building inspector or other positions that don't have a separate or safe office area currently.

Holt said he's excited for the STM and he thinks that people will accept the work of the new building, especially if they view information ahead of time. He and Dowling agreed the new building

A diagram breaking down the schematics of the town's new Public Safety Complex, which will be located at the current fire Department home on 48 Stage Road.



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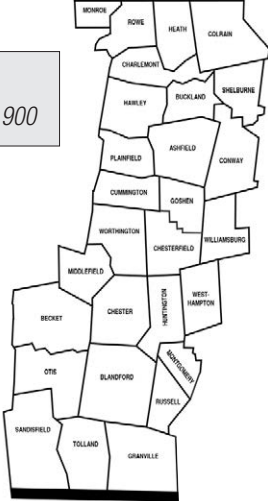
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ICE DAY



Trees along Gore Road also feel the effects of a full ice coat.

Photos by Mary Kronholm



No clothes on the line, but it was a nice day for icicles to form.



Trees on North Street sag under the weight of ice.



Tree branches in Blandford crystallize under a coating of ice during winter weather on Tuesday, Feb. 16.



Iced over trees hang low over town powerlines.

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